

Remarks

Claims 1-10 are pending. Claims 1, 7, and 9 have been amended. Claim 9 has been amended to add clarity. Claims 11-20 are new. No new matter has been added.

The title of the invention has been amended to be in conformity with the parent PCT Application, as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

The Examiner requested that complete copies of the foreign references that were cited in the search report be provided and placed on a 1449 for consideration. The Applicants have provided copies of these foreign references, along with a form SB08A (equivalent to form 1449).

The Examiner also requested that drawings be provided on pages which are separated from the priority document. The Applicants have provided the drawings on separate pages, as requested by the Examiner.

Claim Rejection – 35 USC §112:

Claims 1-10 stand rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. More specifically, the Examiner rejected claim 1 as being indefinite for reciting “the broad recitation vehicle, and the claim also recites a convertible vehicle which is the narrower statement of the range/limitation.” In addition, the Examiner rejected claim 1 as being indefinite by stating “auto body”, which has no clear antecedent basis.

The Applicants have amended claims 1 and 7 to overcome these rejections. Therefore, the Applicants request that the rejections of claims 1-10 be withdrawn.

Claim Rejection – 35 USC §102:

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being clearly anticipated by EP 0 955 228. In addition, claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being clearly anticipated by EP 0 955 228.

The Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite, in part, “at least one retaining bridge (12) wherein the retaining bridge (12) includes a center area (8) and at least one side attachment flange (13) extending from the center area (8) such that the attachment flange (13) is attached to the underbody (2) and the at least two reinforcing struts (4, 5) are attached to the center area (8). [emphasis added.]

Therefore, the prior art references fail to disclose each and every element of claim 1 and the rejection should be withdrawn. Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance. Claims 2-10 and 1, which depend from allowable claim 1, are allowable for at least the same reasons that claim 1 is allowable.

Allowable Subject Matter:

The Examiner indicated that claim 10 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 USC §112, 2nd paragraph, and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicants thank the Examiner for the allowable subject matter. The Applicants have rewritten claim 10 as new independent claim 11. Claim 11 includes claim 10 and all of the limitations of the base claim and intervening claims 8 and 9. In addition, claim 11 has been rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 USC §112, 2nd paragraph.

Claims 12-17 have been added to depend from allowable claim 11 and are allowable for at least the same reasons that claim 11 is allowable.

New Claims:

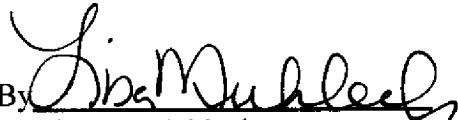
The Applicants have added new claims 12-20. Support for claims 12-20 can be found in ¶'s[0021]-[0027] of the specification and in Figures 2-4 and 6. No new matter has been added.

CONCLUSIONS

This Amendment is believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action mailed March 6, 2008. The amendments to the claims, the remarks in support of the amended and rejected claims, and the new claims are believed to place this application in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Helmut Von Stock-Hausen-Petersen, et al.

By 
Lisa M. Muhleck
Reg. No. 61,710

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QUINN LAW GROUP, PLLC
39555 Orchard Hill Place, Ste. 520
Novi, Michigan 48375
Phone: 248-380-9300
Fax: 248-380-8968